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NEW YORK CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

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DR. R. S. STORRS' ORATION

ON

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,

AND

THE EFFECTS OF IT.

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ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,  
900 BROADWAY, COR. 20th STREET, NEW YORK.

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THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION  
OF  
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

AT  
THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC, NEW YORK,

*JULY 4th, 1876.*

HON. JOHN A. DIX, PRESIDING.

WITH THE

ORATION, AND THE OTHER EXERCISES.



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E. O. JENKINS, PRINTER, 20 NORTH WILLIAM ST., N. Y.

## ORDER OF EXERCISES.

1776.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

1876.

OF THE

ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

Signing of the Declaration

*OF INDEPENDENCE,*

AT

THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC,

TUESDAY, JULY 4th, 1876,

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

*NEW YORK CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION COMMITTEE.*

---

RUSH C. HAWKINS, Chairman.

J. P. PANNEs, Secretary.

GEN. ALEXANDER SHALER,  
Chairman Committee on Illumination, Decoration, Procession, and Police.

HENRY HAVEMEYER,  
Chairman Committee on Finance.

THURLOW WEED,  
Chairman Committee on Oration, Ode, and Invitation.

PAUL GOEPEL,  
Chairman Committee on Music.

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THE COMMITTEE ON ORATION, ODE, INVITATION, ETC., WAS COMPOSED OF THE FOLLOWING  
GENTLEMEN:

PETER COOPER, THURLOW WEED,  
D. VAN NOSTRAND, AUGUSTUS SCHELL,  
SAMUEL B. RUGGLES, CHARLES A. PEABODY,  
GEO. JONES, DEXTER A. HAWKINS.



## PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

A full report of the address of the Hon. JOHN A. DIX was received too late to be inserted in regular order. The publishers give the address in full below.

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### ADDRESS BY THE HON. JOHN A. DIX.

One hundred years ago to-day, in our sister City of Philadelphia, a band of fearless men, at the peril of their lives, and of all they held dear, set at defiance one of the most powerful nations of Europe, and proclaimed to the world that the American Colonies, which they represented, were free and independent States; assuming for them, to use their own language, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which nature and nature's God entitled them.

The three millions in whose behalf the Declaration of Independence was made, are now more than forty millions; and wherever patriotic hearts are to be found—whether in the crowded thoroughfares of cities and towns, or in the quietude of rural habitations—they are overflowing with gratitude for our prosperity, our good name among the nations, our free institutions, our wide-spread domain never again to be pressed by a servile foot, and our deliverance from the dangers through which we have passed; above all, the late fearful peril of disunion. You will hear from eloquent lips the story of our toils and our triumphs, and of the fulfillment of that memorable prophecy uttered a century and a half ago of the progress of the star of empire westward. But, first let us listen to the Rev. Dr. Adams, and unite with him in acknowledging our thankfulness to Almighty God for our preservation during the hundred years that are past, and in fervent supplication for His continued favor and protection through the years that are to come.

## PROGRAMME.

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### 1. ADDRESS. BY THE PRESIDENT, HON. JOHN A. DIX.

One hundred years ago to-day, in our sister City of Philadelphia, a band of patriots set at defiance one of the most powerful nations of Europe. We, their descendants, in sympathy with that great deed, have come together to express our veneration for their patriotism, courage, and sagacity. We have met to honor those who laid the foundation of our nation, and promulgated the principles of freedom. The 3,000,000 of that distant day are the 40,000,000 of to-day; and wherever a patriotic heart exists it will be found overflowing with gratitude that our land will never more be trodden by a servile foot, and that we have safely passed the deadly peril of disunion.

### 2. HYMN. "LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER."

### 3. PRAYER. REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.

### 4. READING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. MR. GEORGE VANDENHOFF.

### 5. CENTENNIAL ODE. BY WILLIAM C. BRYANT.

Through storm and calm the years have led  
Our nation on from stage to stage,  
A century's space, until we tread  
The threshold of another age.

We see where o'er our pathway swept  
A torrent stream of blood and fire ;  
And thank the guardian Power who kept  
Our sacred league of States entire.

Oh ! checkered train of years, farewell,  
With all thy strifes and hopes and fears ;

But with us let thy memories dwell,  
To warn and teach the coming years.

And thou, the new-beginning age,  
Warned by the past, and not in vain,  
Write on a fairer, whiter page  
The record of thy happier reign.

6. ORATION. Rev. R. S. STORRS, D.D., LL.D.

7. THE SONG OF 1876. PRIZE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW YORK  
CENTENNIAL SANGER-VERBAND. WORDS BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

I.

Waken, voice of the Land's Devotion !  
Spirit of freedom, awaken all !  
Ring, ye shores, to the song of Ocean,  
Rivers, answer, and Mountains, call !  
The golden day has come :  
Let every tongue be dumb  
That sounded its malice or murmured its fears ;  
She hath won her story ;  
She wears her glory ;  
We crown her the Land of a Hundred Years !

II.

Out of darkness and toil and danger . . .  
Into the Light of Victory's day,  
Help to the weak, and home to the stranger,  
Freedom to all, she hath held her way !  
Now Europe's orphans rest  
Upon her mother-breast :  
The voices of Nations are heard in the cheers ;  
That shall cast upon her  
New love and honor,  
And crown her the Queen of a Hundred Years !

III.

North and South, we are met as brothers :  
East and West, we are wedded as one !  
Right of each shall secure our mother's ;  
Child of each is her faithful son !  
We give thee heart and hand,  
Our glorious native Land,  
For battle has tried thee, and time endears ;  
We will write thy story,  
And keep thy glory,  
As pure as of old for a Thousand Years !

8. THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.



## CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE AND THE HON. CHARLES  
FRANCIS ADAMS.

---

NEW YORK, *May 20, 1876.*

Hon. CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, *Quincy, Mass.:*

DEAR SIR:—The citizens of New York, with gratifying unanimity, have decided upon celebrating the Centennial Anniversary of American Independence in the spirit of the letter written at Philadelphia, July 5, 1776, by John Adams. The undersigned, appointed to select an Orator for the occasion, have unanimously agreed upon the distinguished grandson of the writer of that letter, and therefore cordially invite you. We earnestly hope that you will find yourself at liberty to accept the invitation.

The Oration is to be delivered upon the 4th of July, at the Academy of Music.

We have the honor to subscribe ourselves, with high regards, very respectfully, your obedient servants,

PETER COOPER, THURLOW WEED, SAMUEL B. RUGGLES,  
GEORGE JONES, DAVID VAN NOSTRAND, AUGUSTUS SCHELL,  
CHARLES A. PEABODY, DEXTER A. HAWKINS.

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## REPLY OF MR. ADAMS.

QUINCY, *May 23, 1876.*

Messrs. PETER COOPER, THURLOW WEED, SAMUEL B. RUGGLES,  
D. VAN NOSTRAND, AUGUSTUS SCHELL, CHARLES A. PEABODY,  
GEORGE JONES, DEXTER A. HAWKINS.

GENTLEMEN:—It is with the most profound sensibility that I receive your letter, inviting me to deliver an address before you on the approaching celebration of the Centennial Anniversary in the City of New York. I know of nothing which, in the course of my life, has been more flattering to my pride. But it does so happen that more than a month ago, my fellow-citizens of Taunton, and its neighborhood, were kind enough to call upon me for a similar service, and I was impelled by their earnest solicitations to give my consent. Hence, I must pray you to excuse me, and to believe me most gratefully,

Your humble servant,

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

## LETTER OF INVITATION TO REV. DR. STORRS.

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NEW YORK, *May 29, 1876.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR:—

The undersigned were appointed a Committee, at a meeting of their fellow-citizens, to co-operate with other committees in arranging for an appropriate celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of American Independence. The unanimity of sentiment already manifested justifies the anticipation that the spirit of patriotism which formerly distinguished these annual celebrations is re-awakening, and that the fires then kindled upon the altars of Freedom will burn as brightly as ever.

Our duty, in part, is to select an Orator for the occasion. In view of the traditions associated with his name, our first appeal was to the Hon. Charles Francis Adams, the son of one, and grandson of another, President of the United States; a gentleman in all respects worthy of so rich an inheritance. But a previous engagement to deliver an Oration in his own State constrained him to decline our invitation. We now turn, naturally, to an eminent Divine, in an adjacent city, of whose warm sympathy in the movement we feel assured; and, although there is but brief time for preparation, we confidently hope that a sense of patriotic duty will prompt your acceptance of the invitation we now have the honor of extending to you.

With sentiments of the highest respect, we are, very truly, your obedient servants,

PETER COOPER,  
THURLOW WEED,  
SAMUEL B. RUGGLES,  
D. VAN NOSTRAND,  
AUGUSTUS SCHELL,  
GEORGE JONES,  
CHARLES A. PEABODY  
DEXTER A. HAWKINS.

The Reverend RICHARD S. STORRS, D.D., LL.D.,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

## LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE.

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BROOKLYN, *June 1, 1876.*

GENTLEMEN:—

Your very kind invitation of the 29th ult. is before me. I could not but feel hesitation in any case in undertaking, on brief notice, with my uncertain and scanty leisure, so prominent a service as that which you propose. This is of course immensely increased by the fact that you ask me now to stand in a place fitly assigned, by consent of all, to an eminent American statesman and publicist—the worthy successor of that “Colossus” in the debate by whose vigorous eloquence the Declaration was carried triumphantly through the Congress of 1776. It would be absurd for me to attempt any such discourse, at the coming anniversary, as would have been easy to this distinguished citizen. Indeed, in his absence, to fully match the height of the occasion, you would have to unlock the eloquent lips which death sealed, years ago, at Marshfield, or at Boston. But I rejoice in your purpose to commemorate the day which must always continue dear to Americans, in the city whose rapid and splendid progress has added so much in other lands to our national fame; and I do not feel at liberty to refuse even this service which you have requested, in furtherance of your plans.

I, therefore, frankly accept your invitation, trusting that your kindness will excuse the imperfection with which, under the circumstances, I must expect to set forth such thoughts as are suggested by the close of this eventful and prophetic period in our national history.

I remain, gentlemen, with highest regard,

Your friend, and fellow-citizen,

RICHARD S. STORRS.

Messrs. PETER COOPER, THURLOW WEED, SAMUEL B. RUGGLES,  
D. VAN NOSTRAND, AUGUSTUS SCHELL, GEORGE JONES, CHARLES  
A. PEABODY, DEXTER A. HAWKINS,—Committee.



THE  
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,  
AND  
THE EFFECTS OF IT.

AN ORATION DELIVERED BEFORE  
*THE CITIZENS OF NEW YORK,*

AT THE CELEBRATION OF  
THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY,

JULY 4th, 1876.

BY  
RICHARD S. STORRS, D.D., LL.D.



NEW YORK:  
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,  
900 BROADWAY, COR. 20th STREET.  
1876.

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## ORATION.

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MR. PRESIDENT: FELLOW CITIZENS:—

THE long-expected day has come, and passing peacefully the impalpable line which separates ages, the Republic completes its hundredth year. The predictions in which affectionate hope gave inspiration to political prudence are fulfilled. The fears of the timid, and the hopes of those to whom our national existence is a menace, are alike disappointed. The fable of the physical world becomes the fact of the political; and after alternate sunshine and storm, after heavings of the earth which only deepened its roots, and ineffectual blasts of lightning whose lurid threat died in the air, under a sky now raining on it benignant influence, the century-plant of American Independence and popular Government bursts into this magnificent blossom, of a joyful celebration illuminating the land !

With what desiring though doubtful expectation those whose action we commemorate looked for the possible coming of this day, we know from the

*Oration at New York.*

records which they have left. With what anxious solicitude the statesmen and the soldiers of the following generation anticipated the changes which might take place before this centennial year should be reached, we have heard ourselves, in their great and fervent admonitory words. How dim and drear the prospect seemed to our own hearts fifteen years since, when, on the fourth of July, 1861, the Thirty-seventh Congress met at Washington with no representative in either house from any State south of Tennessee and Western Virginia, and when a determined and numerous army, under skillful commanders, approached and menaced the Capital and the Government,—this we surely have not forgotten; nor how, in the terrible years which followed, the blood and fire, and vapor of smoke, seemed often-times to swim as a sea, or to rise as a wall, between our eyes and this anniversary.

‘It cannot outlast the second generation from those who founded it’ was the exulting conviction of the many who loved the traditions and state of monarchy, and who felt them insecure before the widening fame in the world of our prosperous Republic. ‘It may not reach its hundredth year’ was the deep and sometimes the sharp apprehension of those who felt, as all of us felt, that their own liberty, welfare, hope, with the brightest political promise of the world, were bound up with the unity and the life of our nation. Never was solicitude

*Deliverance of the Nation.*

more intense, never was prayer to Almighty God more fervent and constant—not in the earliest beginnings of our history, when Indian ferocity threatened that history with a swift termination, not in the days of supremest trial amid the Revolution—than in those years when the nation seemed suddenly split asunder, and forces which had been combined for its creation were clenched and rocking back and forth in bloody grapple on the question of its maintenance.

The prayer was heard. The effort and the sacrifice have come to their fruitage; and to-day the nation—still one, as at the start, though now expanded over such immense spaces, absorbing such incessant and diverse elements from other lands, developing within it opinions so conflicting, interests so various, and forms of occupation so novel and manifold—to-day the nation, emerging from the toil and the turbulent strife, with the earlier and the later clouds alike swept out of its resplendent stellar arch, pauses from its work to remember and rejoice; with exhilarated spirit to anticipate its future; with reverent heart to offer to God its great *Te Deum*.

Not here alone, in this great city, whose lines have gone out into all the earth, and whose superb progress in wealth, in culture, and in civic renown, is itself the most illustrious token of the power and beneficence of that frame of government under which it has been realized; not alone in yonder, I had

*Oration at New York.*

almost said adjoining, city, whence issued the paper that first announced our national existence, and where now rises the magnificent Exposition, testifying for all progressive States to their respect and kindness toward us, the radiant clasp of diamond and opal on the girdle of the sympathies which interweave their peoples with ours; not alone in Boston, the historic town, first in resistance to British aggression, and foremost in plans for the new and popular organization, one of whose citizens wrote his name, as if cutting it with a plough-share, at the head of all on our great charter, another of whose citizens was its intrepid and powerful champion, aiding its passage through the Congress; not there alone, nor yet in other great cities of the land, but in smaller towns, in villages and hamlets, this day will be kept, a secular Sabbath, sacred alike to memory and to hope.

Not only, indeed, where men are assembled, as we are here, will it be honored. The lonely and remote will have their part in this commemoration. Where the boatman follows the winding stream, or the woodman explores the forest shades; where the miner lays down his eager drill beside rocks which guard the precious veins; or where the herdsman, along the sierras, looks forth on the seas which now reflect the rising day, which at our midnight shall be gleaming like gold in the setting sun,—there also will the day be regarded, as a day of memorial. The sailor on the sea will note it, and dress his ship in

### *The Day Widely Recognized.*

its brightest array of flags and bunting. Americans dwelling in foreign lands will note and keep it.

London itself will to-day be more festive because of the event which a century ago shadowed its streets, incensed its Parliament, and tore from the crown of its obstinate King the chiefest jewel. On the boulevards of Paris, in the streets of Berlin, and along the leveled bastions of Vienna, at Marseilles and at Florence, upon the silent liquid ways of stately Venice, in the passes of the Alps, under the shadow of church and obelisk, palace and ruin, which still prolong the majesty of Rome; yea, further East, on the Bosphorus, and in Syria; in Egypt, which writes on the front of its compartment in the great Exhibition, "The oldest people of the world sends its morning-greeting to the youngest nation;" along the heights behind Bombay, in the foreign hongs of Canton, in the "Islands of the Morning," which found the dawn of their new age in the startling sight of an American squadron entering their bays--everywhere will be those who have thought of this day, and who join with us to greet its coming.

No other such anniversary, probably, has attracted hitherto such general notice. You have seen Rome, perhaps, on one of those shining April days when the traditional anniversary of the founding of the city fills its streets with civic processions, with military display, and the most elaborate fire-works in Europe; you may have seen Holland, in 1872, when the whole

*Oration at New York.*

country bloomed with orange on the three-hundredth anniversary of the capture by the sea-beggars of the city of Briel, and of the revolt against Spanish domination which thereupon flashed on different sides into sudden explosion. But these celebrations, and others like them, have been chiefly local. The world outside has taken no wide impression from them. This of ours is the first of which many lands, in different tongues, will have had report. Partly because the world is narrowed in our time, and its distant peoples are made neighbors, by the fleeter machine-ries now in use; partly because we have drawn so many to our population from foreign lands, while the restless and acquisitive spirit of our people has made them at home on every shore; but partly, also, and essentially, because of the nature and the relations of that event which we commemorate, and of the influence exerted by it on subsequent history, the attention of men is more or less challenged, in every centre of commerce and of thought, by this anniversary.

Indeed it is not unnatural to feel—certainly it is not irreverent to feel—that they who by wisdom, by valor, and by sacrifice, have contributed to perfect and maintain the institutions which we possess, and have added by death as well as by life to the lustre of our history, must also have an interest in this day; that in their timeless habitations they remember us beneath the lower circle of the heavens, are glad in

*Unseen Spectators.*

our joy, and share and lead our grateful praise. To a spirit alive with the memories of the time, and rejoicing in its presage of nobler futures, recalling the great, the beloved, the heroic, who have labored and joyfully died for its coming, it will not seem too fond an enthusiasm to feel that the air is quick with shapes we cannot see, and glows with faces whose light serene we may not catch ! They who counseled in the Cabinet, they who defined and settled the law in decisions of the Bench, they who pleaded with mighty eloquence in the Senate, they who poured out their souls in triumphant effusion for the liberty which they loved in forum or pulpit, they who gave their young and glorious life as an offering on the field, that government for the people, and by the people, might not perish from the earth—it cannot be but that they too have part and place in this Jubilee of our history ! God make our doings not unworthy of such spectators ! and make our spirit sympathetic with theirs from whom all selfish passion and pride have now forever passed away !

The interest which is felt so distinctly and widely in this anniversary reflects a light on the greatness of the action which it commemorates. It shows that we do not unduly exaggerate the significance or the importance of that ; that it had really large, even world-wide relations, and contributed an effective and a valuable force to the furtherance of the cause of freedom, education, humane institutions, and popular

*Oration at New York.*

advancement, wherever its influence has been felt. Yet when we consider the action itself, it may easily seem but slight in its nature, as it was certainly commonplace in its circumstances. There was nothing even picturesque in its surroundings, to enlist for it the pencil of the painter, or help to fix any luminous image of that which was done on the popular memory.

In this respect it is singularly contrasted with other great and kindred events in general history; with those heroic and fruitful actions in English history which had especially prepared the way for it, and with which the thoughtful student of the past will always set it in intimate relations. Its utter simplicity, as compared with their splendor, becomes impressive.

When, five centuries and a half before, on the fifteenth of June, and the following days, in the year of our Lord 1215, the English barons met King John in the long meadow of Runnemede, and forced from him the Magna Charta—the strong foundation and steadfast bulwark of English liberty, concerning which Mr. Hallam has said in our own time that “all which has been since obtained is little more than as confirmation or commentary,”—no circumstance was wanting, of outward pageantry, to give dignity, brilliance, impressiveness, to the scene. On the one side was the King, with the Bishops and nobles who attended him, with the Master of the Templars, and the Papal legate before whom he had lately rendered

*Magna Charta.*

his homage.\* On the other side was the great and determined majority of the barons of England, with multitudes of knights, armed vassals, and retainers.† With them in purpose, and in resolute zeal, were most of those who attended the King. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the English clergy, was with them; the Bishops of London, Winchester, Lincoln, Rochester, and of other great sees. The Earl of Pembroke, dauntless and wise, of vast and increasing power in the realm, and not long after to be its Protector, was really at their head. Robert Fitz-Walter, whose fair daughter Matilda the profligate king had forcibly abducted, was Marshal of the army—the “Army of God, and the Holy Church.” William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, half-brother of the King, was on the field; the Earls of Albemarle, Arundel, Gloucester, Hereford, Norfolk, Oxford, the great Earl Warenne, who claimed the same right of the sword in his barony which William the Conqueror had had in the kingdom, the Constable of Scotland, Hubert de Burgh,

\* May 15, A.D. 1213.

† “Quant à ceux qui se trouvaient du côté des barons, il n'est ni nécessaire ni possible de les énumérer, puisque toute la noblesse d'Angleterre réunie en un seul corps, ne pouvait tomber sous le calcul. Lorsque les prétentions des révoltés eurent été débattues, le roi Jean, comprenant son infériorité vis-à-vis des forces de ses barons, accorda sans résistance les lois et libertés qu'on lui demandait, et les confirma par la charte.”

Chronique de Matt. Paris, trad. par A. Huillard-Bréholles. Tome Troisième, pp. 6, 7.

*Oration at New York.*

seneschal of Poictou, and many other powerful nobles,—descendants of the daring soldiers whose martial valor had mastered England, Crusaders who had followed Richard at Ascalon and at Jaffa, whose own liberties had since been in mortal peril. Some burgesses of London were present, as well ; troubadours, minstrels, and heralds were not wanting ; and doubtless there mingled with the throng those skillful clerks whose pens had drawn the great instrument of freedom, and whose training in language had given a remarkable precision to its exact clauses and cogent terms.

Pennons and banners streamed at large, and spearheads gleamed, above the host. The June sunshine flashed reflected from inlaid shield and masaled armor. The terrible quivers of English yeomen hung on their shoulders. The voice of trumpets, and clamoring bugles, was in the air. The whole scene was vast as a battle, though bright as a tournament ; splendid, but threatening, like burnished clouds, in which lightnings sleep. The king, one of the handsomest men of the time, though cruelty, perfidy, and every foul passion must have left their traces on his face, was especially fond of magnificence in dress ; wearing, we are told, on one Christmas occasion, a rich mantle of red satin, embroidered with sapphires and pearls, a tunic of white damask, a girdle lustrous with precious stones, and a baldric from his shoulder, crossing his breast, set with diamonds and emeralds,

*The Brilliant Panorama.*

while even his gloves, as indeed is still indicated on his fine effigy in Worcester cathedral, bore similar ornaments, the one a ruby, the other a sapphire.

Whatever was superb, therefore, in that consummate age of royal and baronial state, whatever was splendid in the glittering and grand apparatus of chivalry, whatever was impressive in the almost more than princely pomp of prelates of the Church,—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth can give,—

all this was marshalled on that historic plain in Surrey, where John and the barons faced each other, where Saxon king and Saxon earl had met in council before the Norman had footing in England; and all combined to give a fit magnificence of setting to the great charter there granted and sealed.

The tower of Windsor—not of the present castle and palace, but of the earlier detached fortress which already crowned the cliff, and from which John had come to the field—looked down on the scene. On the one side, low hills enclosed the meadow; on the other, the Thames flowed brightly by, seeking the capital and the sea. Every feature of the scene was English, save one; but over all loomed, in a portentous and haughty stillness, in the ominous presence of the envoy from Rome, that ubiquitous power, surpassing all others, which already had once laid the kingdom under interdict, and had exiled John from church and throne, but to which later he had

*Oration at New York.*

been reconciled, and on which now he secretly relied to annul the charter which he was granting.

The brilliant panorama illuminates the page which bears its story. It rises still as a vision before one, as he looks on the venerable parchment originals, preserved to our day in the British Museum. If it be true, as Hallam has said, that from that era a new soul was infused into the people of England, it must be confessed that the place, the day, and all the circumstances of that new birth were fitting to the great and the vital event.

That age passed away, and its peculiar splendor of aspect was not thereafter to be repeated. Yet when, four hundred years later, on the seventh of June,\* 1628, the Petition of Right, the second great charter of the liberties of England, was presented by Parliament to Charles the First, the scene and its accessories were hardly less impressive.

\* *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles I., 1628-9.*

*Rushworth's Hist. Coll. Charles I., p. 625.*

It is rather remarkable that neither Hume, Clarendon, Hallam, De Lolme, nor Macaulay, mentions this date, though all recognize the capital importance of the event. It does not appear in even Knight's Popular History of England. Miss Aikin, in her Memoirs of the Court of Charles I., gives it as June 8, (Vol. I, p. 216); and Chambers' Encyclopædia, which ought to be careful and accurate in regard to the dates of events in English history, says, under the title 'Petition of Rights': "At length, on both Houses of Parliament insisting on a fuller answer, he pronounced an unqualified assent in the usual form of words, 'Soit fait comme il est désiré,' on the 26th of June, 1628." The same statement is repeated in the latest Revised Edition of that Encyclopædia. Lingard gives the date correctly.

*The Petition of Right.*

Into that law—called a Petition, as if to mask the deadly energy of its blow upon tyranny—had been collected by the skill of its framers all the heads of the despotic prerogative which Charles had exercised, that they might all be smitten together, with one tremendous destroying stroke. The king, enthroned in his chair of state, looked forth on those who waited for his word, as still he looks, with his fore-casting and melancholy face, from the canvas of Van Dyck. Before him were assembled the nobles of England, in peaceful array, and not in armor, but with a civil power in their hands which the older gauntlets could not have held, and with the memories of a long renown almost as visible to themselves and to the king as were the tapestries suspended on the walls.

Crowding the bar, behind these descendants of the earlier barons, were the members of the House of Commons, with whom the law now presented to the king had had its origin, and whose boldness and tenacity had constrained the peers, after vain endeavor to modify its provisions, to accept them as they stood. They were the most powerful body of representatives of the kingdom that had yet been convened; possessing a private wealth, it was estimated, surpassing three-fold that of the Peers, and representing not less than they the best life, and the oldest lineage, of the kingdom which they loved.

Their dexterous, dauntless, and far-sighted sagacity

*Oration at New York.*

is yet more evident as we look back than their wealth or their breeding; and among them were men whose names will be familiar while England continues. Wentworth was there, soon to be the most dangerous of traitors to the cause of which he was then the champion, but who then appeared as resolute as ever to vindicate the ancient, lawful, and vital liberties of the kingdom; and Pym was there, the unsurpassed statesman, who, not long afterward was to warn the dark and haughty apostate that he never again would leave pursuit of him so long as his head stood on his shoulders.\* Hampden was there, considerate and serene, but inflexible as an oak; once imprisoned already for his resistance to an unjust taxation, and ready again to suffer and to conquer in the same supreme cause. Sir John Eliot was there, eloquent and devoted, who had tasted also the bitterness of imprisonment, and who, after years of its subsequent experience, was to die a martyr in the Tower. Coke was there, seventy-seven years of age, but full of fire as full of fame, whose vehement and unswerving hand had had chief part in framing the Petition. Selden was there, the repute of whose learning was already continental. Sir Francis Seymour, Sir Robert Philips, Strode, Hobart, Denzil Holles, and Valentine—such were the commoners; and there, at the outset of a career not imagined by either, faced the king a silent young member who had come now

\* Welwood's Memorials, quoted in Forster's Life of Pym, p. 62.

*The Seventh of June, 1628.*

to his first Parliament, at the age of twenty-nine, from the borough of Huntingdon, Oliver Cromwell.

In a plain cloth suit he probably stood among his colleagues. But they were often splendid, and even sumptuous, in dress; with slashed doublets, and cloaks of velvet, with flowing collars of rich lace, the swords by their sides, in embroidered belts, with flashing hilts, their very hats jeweled and plumed, the abundant dressed and perfumed hair falling in curls upon their shoulders. Here and there may have been those who still more distinctly symbolized their spirit, with steel corslets, overlaid with lace and rich embroidery.

So stood they in the presence, representing to the full the wealth, and genius, and stately civic pomp of England, until the king had pronounced his assent, in the express customary form, to the law which confirmed the popular liberties; and when, on hearing his unequivocal final assent, they burst into loud, even passionate acclamations of victorious joy, there had been from the first no scene more impressive in that venerable Hall, whose history went back to Edward the Confessor.

In what sharp contrast with the rich ceremonial and the splendid accessories of these preceding kindred events, appears that modest scene at Philadelphia, from which we gratefully date to-day a hundred years of constant and prosperous national life!

In a plain room, of an unpretending and recent

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building—the lower east room of what then was a State-house, what since has been known as the “Independence Hall”—in the midst of a city of perhaps thirty thousand inhabitants—a city which preserved its rural aspect, and the quaint simplicity of whose plan and structures had always been marked among American towns—were assembled probably less than fifty persons to consider a paper prepared by a young Virginia lawyer, giving reasons for a Resolve which the assembly had adopted two days before. They were farmers, planters, lawyers, physicians, surveyors of land, with one eminent Presbyterian clergyman. A majority of them had been educated at such schools, or primitive colleges, as then existed on this continent, while a few had enjoyed the rare advantage of training abroad, and foreign travel; but a considerable number, and among them some of the most influential, had had no other education than that which they had gained by diligent reading while at their trades or on their farms.

The figure to which our thoughts turn first is that of the author of the careful paper on the details of which the discussion turned. It has no special majesty or charm, the slight tall frame, the sun-burned face, the gray eyes spotted with hazel, the red hair which crowns the head; but already, at the age of thirty-three, the man has impressed himself on his associates as a master of principles, and of the language in which those principles find expression,

### *The Continental Congress.*

so that his colleagues have left to him, almost wholly, the work of preparing the important Declaration. He wants readiness in debate, and so is now silent; but he listens eagerly to the vigorous argument and the forcible appeals of one of his fellows on the committee, Mr. John Adams, and now and then speaks with another of the committee, much older than himself—a stout man, with a friendly face, in a plain dress, whom the world already had heard something of as Benjamin Franklin. These three are perhaps most prominently before us as we recall the vanished scene, though others were there of fine presence and cultivated manners, and though all impress us as substantial and respectable representative men, however harsh the features of some, however brawny their hands with labor. But certainly nothing could be more unpretending, more destitute of pictorial charm than that small assembly of persons for the most part quite unknown to previous fame, and half of whose names it is not probable that half of us in this assembly could now repeat.

After a discussion somewhat prolonged, as it seemed at the time, especially as it had been continued from previous days, and after some minor amendments of the paper, toward evening it was adopted, and ordered to be sent to the several States, signed by the president and the secretary; and the simple transaction was complete. Whatever there may have been of proclamation and bell-ringing

*Oration at New York.*

appears to have come on subsequent days. It was almost a full month before the paper was engrossed, and signed by the members. It must have been nearly or quite the same time before the news of its adoption had reached the remoter parts of the land.

If pomp of circumstances were necessary to make an event like this great and memorable, there would have been others in our own history more worthy far of our commemoration. As matched against multitudes in general history, it would sink into instant and complete insignificance. Yet here, to-day, a hundred years from the adoption of that paper, in a city which counts its languages by scores, and beats with the tread of a million feet, in a country whose enterprise flies abroad over sea and land on the rush of engines not then imagined, in a time so full of exciting hopes that it hardly has leisure to contemplate the past, we pause from all our toil and traffic, our eager plans and impetuous debate, to commemorate the event. The whole land pauses, as I have said; and some distinct impression of it will follow the sun, wherever he climbs the steep of Heaven, until in all countries it has more or less touched the thoughts of men.

Why is this? is a question, the answer to which should interpret and vindicate our assemblage.

It is not simply because a century happens to have passed since the event thus remembered occurred.

*The Declaration an Act of the People.*

A hundred years are always closing from some event, and have been since Adam was in his prime. There was, of course, some special importance in the action then accomplished—in the nature of that action, since not in its circumstances—to justify such long record of it; and that importance it is ours to define. In the perspective of distance the small things disappear, while the great and eminent keep their place. As Carlyle has said: “A king in the midst of his body-guards, with his trumpets, war-horses, and gilt standard-bearers, will look great though he be little; only some Roman Carus can give audience to satrap ambassadors, while seated on the ground, with a woollen cap, and supping on boiled pease, like a common soldier.”\*

What was, then, the great reality of power in what was done a hundred years since, which gives it its masterful place in history—makes it Roman and regal amid all its simplicity?

Of course, as the prime element of its power, it was the action of a People, and not merely of persons; and such action of a People has always a momentum, a public force, a historic significance, which can pertain to no individual arguments and appeals. There are times, indeed, when it has the energy and authority in it of a secular inspiration; when the supreme soul which rules the world comes through it to utterance, and a thought surpassing

\* Essay on Schiller. Essays: Vol. II., p. 301.

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man's wisest plan, a will transcending his strongest purpose, is heard in its commanding voice.

It does not seem extravagant to say that the time to which our thoughts are turned was one of these.

For a century and a half the emigrants from Europe had brought hither, not the letters alone, the arts and industries, or the religious convictions, but the hardy moral and political life, which had there been developed in ages of strenuous struggle and work. France and Germany, Holland and Sweden, as well as England, Scotland, and Ireland, had contributed to this. The Austrian Tyrol, the Bavarian highlands, the Bohemian plain, Denmark, even Portugal, had had their part in this colonization. The ample domain which here received the earnest immigrants had imparted to them of its own oneness; and diversities of language, race, and custom, had fast disappeared in the governing unity of a common aspiration, and a common purpose to work out through freedom a nobler well-being.

The general moral life of this people, so various in origin, so accordant in spirit, had only risen to grander force through the toil and strife, the austere training, the long patience of endurance, to which it here had been subjected. The exposures to heat, and cold, and famine, to unaccustomed labors, to alternations of climate unknown in the old world, to malarial forces brooding above the mellow and drainless recent lands,—these had fatally stricken many;

### *Unity of the Colonies.*

but those who survived were tough and robust, the more so, perhaps, because of the perils which they had surmounted. Education was not easy, books were not many, and the daily newspaper was unknown; but political discussion had been always going on, and men's minds had gathered unconscious force as they strove with each other, in eager debate, on questions concerning the common welfare. They had had much experience in subordinate legislation, on the local matters belonging to their care; had acquired dexterity in performing public business, and had often had to resist or amend the suggestions or dictates of Royal governors. For a recent people, dwelling apart from older and conflicting states, they had had a large experience in war, the crack of the rifle being never unfamiliar along the near frontier, where disciplined skill was often combined with savage fury to sweep with sword or scar with fire their scattered settlements.

By every species, therefore, of common work, of discussion, endurance, and martial struggle, the descendants of the colonists scattered along the American coast had been allied to each other. They were more closely allied than they knew. It needed only some signal occasion, some summons to a sudden heroic decision, to bring them into instant general combination; and Huguenot and Hollander, Swede, German, and Protestant Portuguese, as well as Englishman, Scotchman, Irishman, would then forget

*Oration at New York.*

that their ancestors had been different, in the supreme consciousness that now they had a common country, and before all else were all of them Americans.

That time had come. That consciousness had for fifteen years been quickening in the people, since the "Wrts of Assistance" had been applied for and granted, in 1761, when Otis, resigning his honorable position under the crown, had flung himself against the alarming innovation with an eloquence as blasting as the stroke of the lightning which in the end destroyed his life. — With every fresh invasion by England of their popular liberties, with every act which threatened such invasion by providing opportunity and the instruments for it, the sense of a common privilege and right, of a common inheritance in the country they were fashioning out of the forest, of a common place in the history of the world, had been increased among the colonists. They were plain people, with no strong tendencies to the ideal. They wanted only a chance for free growth; but they must have that, and have it together, though the continent cracked. The diamond is formed, it has sometimes been supposed, under a swift enormous pressure, of masses meeting, and forcing the carbon into a crystal. The ultimate spirit of the American colonists was formed in like manner; the weight of a rocky continent beneath, the weight of an oppression only intolerable because undefined

*Agreement in the Declaration.*

pressing on it from above. But now that spirit, of inestimable price, reflecting light from every angle, and harder to be broken than anything material, was suddenly shown in acts and declarations of conventions and assemblies from the Penobscot to the St. Mary's.

Any commanding public temper, once established in a people, grows bolder, of course, more inquisitive and inventive, more sensible of its rights, more determined on its future, as it comes more frequently into exercise. This in the colonies lately had had the most significant of all its expressions, up to that point, in the resolves of popular assemblies that the time had come for a final separation from the kingdom of Great Britain. The eminent Congress of two years before had given it powerful reinforcement. Now, at last, it entered the representative American assembly, and claimed from that the ultimate word. It found what it sought. The Declaration was only the voice of that supreme, impersonal force, that will of communities, that universal soul of the State.

The vote of the colony then thinly covering a part of the spaces not yet wholly occupied by this great State, was not, indeed, at once formally given for such an instrument. It was wisely delayed, under the judicious counsel of Jay, till a provincial Congress could assemble, specially called, and formally authorized, to pronounce the deliberate resolve of the colony; and so it happened that only twelve colonies

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voted at first for the great Declaration, and that New York was not joined to the number till five days later. But Jay knew, and all knew, that numerous, wealthy, eminent in character, high in position as were those here and elsewhere in the country—in Massachusetts, in Virginia, and in the Carolinas—who were by no means yet prepared to sever their connection with Great Britain, the general and governing mind of the people was fixed upon this, with a decision which nothing could change, with a tenacity which nothing could break. The forces tending to that result had wrought to their development with a steadiness and strength which the stubbornest resistance had hardly delayed. The spirit which now shook light and impulse over the land was recent in its precise demand, but as old in its birth as the first Christian settlements; and it was that spirit—not of one, nor of fifty, nor of all the individuals in all the conventions, but the vaster spirit which lay behind—which put itself on sudden record through the prompt and accurate pen of Jefferson.

He was himself in full sympathy with it, and only by reason of that sympathy could give it such consummate expression. Not out of books, legal researches, historical inquiry, the careful and various studies of language, came that document; but out of repeated public debate, out of manifold personal and private discussion, out of his clear sympathetic observation of the changing feeling and thought of

*Public Sentiment Declared.*

men, out of that exquisite personal sensibility to vague and impalpable popular impulses which was in him innately combined with artistic taste, an ideal nature, and rare power of philosophical thought. The voice of the cottage as well as the college, of the church as well as the legislative assembly, was in the paper. It echoed the talk of the farmer in home-spun, as well as the classic eloquence of Lee, or the terrible tones of Patrick Henry. It gushed at last from the pen of its writer, like the fountain from the roots of Lebanon, a brimming river when it issues from the rock; but it was because its sources had been supplied, its fullness filled, by unseen springs; by the rivulets winding far up among the cedars, and percolating through hidden crevices in the stone; by melting snows, whose white sparkle seemed still on the stream; by fierce rains, with which the basins above were drenched; by even the dews, silent and wide, which had lain in stillness all night upon the hill.

The Platonic idea of the development of the State was thus realized here; first Ethics, then Politics. A public opinion, energetic and dominant, took its place from the start as the chief instrument of the new civilization. No dashing manœuvre of skillful commanders, no sudden burst of popular passion, was in the Declaration; but the vast mystery of a supreme and imperative public life, at once diffused and intense—behind all persons, before all plans,

*Oration at New York.*

beneath which individual wills are exalted, at whose touch the personal mind is inspired, and under whose transcendent impulse the smallest instrument becomes of a terrific force. That made the Declaration; and that makes it now, in its modest brevity, take its place with Magna Charta and the Petition of Right, as full as they of vital force, and destined to a parallel permanence.

Because this intense common life of a determined and manifold People has not behind them, other documents, in form similar to this, and in polish and cadence of balanced phrase perhaps its superiors, have had no hold like that which it keeps on the memory of men. What papers have challenged the attention of mankind within the century, in the stately Spanish tongue, in Mexico, New Granada, Venezuela, Bolivia, or the Argentine Republic, which the world at large has now quite forgotten! How the resonant proclamations of German or of French Republicans, of Hungarian or Spanish revolutionists and patriots, have vanished as sound absorbed in the air! Eloquent, persuasive, just, as they were, with a vigor of thought, a fervor of passion, a fine completeness and symmetry of expression, in which they could hardly be surpassed, they have now only a literary value. They never became great general forces. They were weak, because they were personal; and history is too crowded, civilization is too vast, to take much impression from occasional docu-

*The Declaration Old in its Life.*

ments. Only then is a paper of secular force, or long remembered, when behind it is the ubiquitous energy of the popular will, rolling through its words in vast diapason, and charging its clauses with tones of thunder.

Because such an energy was behind it, our Declaration had its majestic place and meaning; and they who adopted it saw nowhere else

So rich advantage of a promised glory,  
As smiled upon the forehead of their action.

Because of that, we read it still, and look to have it as audible as now, among the dissonant voices of the world, when other generations, in long succession, have come and gone!

— But further, too, it must be observed that this paper, adopted a hundred years since, was not merely the declaration of a People, as distinguished from eminent and cultured individuals—a confession before the world of the public State-faith, rather than a political thesis—but it was also the declaration of a People which claimed for its own a great inheritance of equitable laws, and of practical liberty, and which now was intent to enlarge and enrich that. It had roots in the past, and a long genealogy; and so it had a vitality inherent, and an immense energy.

They who framed it went back, indeed, to first principles. There was something philosophic and

*Oration at New York.*

ideal in their scheme, as always there is when the general mind is deeply stirred. It was not superficial. Yet they were not undertaking to establish new theories, or to build their state upon artificial plans and abstract speculations. They were simply evolving out of the past what therein had been latent; were liberating into free exhibition and unceasing activity a vital force older than the history of their colonization, and wide as the lands from which they came. They had the sweep of vast impulses behind them. The slow tendencies of centuries came to sudden consummation in their Declaration; and the force of its impact upon the affairs and the mind of the world was not to be measured by its contents alone, but by the relation in which these stood to all the vehement discussion and struggle of which it was the latest outcome.

This ought to be, always, distinctly observed.

The tendency is strong, and has been general, among those who have introduced great changes in the government of states, to follow some plan of political, perhaps of social innovation, which enlists their judgment, excites their fancy, and to make a comely theoretic habitation for the national household, rather than to build on the old foundations,—expanding the walls, lifting the height, enlarging the doorways, enlightening with new windows the halls, but still keeping the strength and renewing the age of an old familiar and venerated structure. You re-

*The Weakness of Theoretical Changes.*

member how in France, in 1789, and the following years, the schemes of those whom Napoleon called the “ideologists” succeeded each other, no one of them gaining a permanent supremacy, though each included important elements, till the armed consulate of 1799 swept them all into the air, and put in place of them one masterful genius and ambitious will. You remember how in Spain, in 1812, the new Constitution proclaimed by the Cortes was thought to inaugurate with beneficent provisions a wholly new era of development and progress; yet how the history of the splendid peninsula, from that day to this, has been but the record of a struggle to the death between the Old and the New, the contest as desperate, it would seem, in our time as it was at the first.

It must be so, always, when a preceding state of society and government, which has got itself established through many generations, is suddenly superseded by a different fabric, however more evidently conformed to right reason. The principle is not so strong as the prejudice. Habit masters invention. The new and theoretic shivers its force on the obstinate coherence of the old and the established. The modern structure fails and is replaced, while the grim feudal keep, though scarred and weather-worn, the very cement seeming gone from its walls, still scowls defiance at the red right-hand of the lightning itself.

It was no such rash speculative change which here was attempted. The People whose deputies framed

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our Declaration were largely themselves descendants of Englishmen; and those who were not, had lived long enough under English institutions to be impressed with their tendency and spirit. It was therefore only natural that even when adopting that ultimate measure which severed them from the British crown, they should retain all that had been gained in the mother-land through centuries of endurance and strife. —They left nothing that was good; they abolished the bad, added the needful, and developed into a rule for the continent the splendid precedents of great former occasions. They shared still the boast of Englishmen that their constitution “has no single date from which its duration is to be reckoned,” and that “the origin of the English law is as undiscoverable as that of the Nile.” They went back themselves, for the origin of their liberties, to the most ancient muniments of English freedom. Jefferson had affirmed, in 1774, that a primitive charter of American Independence lay in the fact that as the Saxons had left their native wilds in the North of Europe, and had occupied Britain—the country which they left asserting over them no further control, nor any dependence of them upon it—so the Englishmen coming hither had formed, by that act, another state, over which Parliament had no rights, in which its laws were void till accepted.\*

But while seeking for their liberties so archaic a basis, neither he nor his colleagues were in the least

*Loyalty of the Colonies to English Precedents.*

careless of what subsequent times had done to complete them. There was not one element of popular right, which had been wrested from crown and noble in any age, which they did not keep ; not an equitable rule, for the transfer or the division of property, for the protection of personal rights, or for the detection and punishment of crime, which was not precious in their eyes. Even Chancery jurisdiction they widely retained, with the distinct tribunals, derived from the ecclesiastical courts, for probate of wills ; and English technicalities were maintained in their courts, almost as if they were sacred things. Especially that equality of civil rights among all commoners, which Hallam declares the most prominent characteristic of the English Constitution—the source of its permanence, its improvement, and its vigor—they perfectly preserved ; they only more sharply affirmatively declared it. Indeed, in renouncing their allegiance to the king, and putting the United Colonies in his place, they felt themselves acting in intimate harmony with the spirit and drift of the ancient constitution. The Executive here was to be elective, not hereditary, to be limited and not permanent in the term of his functions ; and no established peerage should exist. But each State retained its governor, its legislature, generally in two houses, its ancient statute and common law ; and if they had been challenged for English authority for their attitude toward the crown, they might have replied in the words of

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Bracton, the Lord Chief-Justice five hundred years before, under the reign of Henry the Third, that “the law makes the king;” “there is no king, where will, and not law, bears rule;” “if the king were without a bridle, that is the law, they ought to put a bridle upon him.”\* They might have replied in the words of Fox, speaking in Parliament, in daring defiance of the temper of the House, but with many supporting him, when he said that in declaring Independence, they “had done no more than the English had done against James the Second.”†

\* *Ipse autem rex, non debet esse sub homine, sed sub Deo et sub Lege, quia Lex facit regem. Attribuat igitur rex Legi quod Lex attribuit ei, videlicet dominationem et potestatem, non est enim rex ubi dominatur voluntas et non Lex.* *De Leg. et Cons. Angliae*; Lib. I., cap 8, P. 5.

Rex autem habet superiorem, Deum. Item, Legem, per quam factus est rex. Item, curiam suam, videlicet comites, Barones, quia comites dicuntur quasi socii regis, et qui habet socium habet magistrum; et ideo si rex fuerit sine fraeno, i. e. sine Lege, debent ei fraenum ponere; etc. Lib. II., cap. 16, P. 3.

The following is still more explicit: “As the head of a body natural cannot change its nerves and sinews, cannot deny to the several parts their proper energy, their due proportion and aliment of blood; neither can a King, who is the head of a body politic, change the laws thereof, nor take from the people what is theirs by right, against their consent. \* \* For he is appointed to protect his subjects in their lives, properties, and laws; for this very end and purpose he has the delegation of power from the people, and he has no just claim to any other power but this.” Sir John Fortescue’s Treatise, *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, c. 9, [about A. D. 1470,] quoted by Hallam, *Mid. Ages*, chap. VIII., part III.

† Speech of October 31, 1776: “The House divided on the Amendment. Yeas, 87; nays, 242.”

*Rulers, Properly Representatives of the People.*

They had done no more; though they had not elected another king in place of him whom they renounced. They had taken no step so far in advance of the then existing English Constitution as those which the Parliament of 1640 took in advance of the previous Parliaments which Charles had dissolved. If there was a right more rooted than another in that Constitution, it was the right of the people which was taxed to have its vote in the taxing legislature. If there was anything more accordant than another with its historic temper and tenor, it was that the authority of the king was determined when his rule became tyrannous. Jefferson had but perfectly expressed the doctrine of the lovers of freedom in England for many generations, when he said in his *Summary view of the Rights of America*, in 1774, that "the monarch is no more than the chief officer of the people, appointed by the laws, and circumscribed with definite powers, to assist in working the great machine of government, erected for their use, and consequently subject to their superintendence;" that "kings are the servants, not the proprietors of the people;" and that a nation claims its rights, "as derived from the laws of nature, not as the gift of their chief magistrate."<sup>\*</sup>

\* Rulers are no more than attorneys, agents, and trustees, for the people, and if the cause, the interest and trust, is insidiously betrayed, or wantonly trifled away, the people have a right to revoke the authority that they themselves have deputed, and to constitute abler and better agents, attorneys, and trustees.—JOHN ADAMS. *Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law*; 1765. Works: Vol. III., pp. 456-7. 37

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That had been the spirit, if not as yet the formulated doctrine, of Raleigh, Hampden, Russell, Sydney—of all the great leaders of liberty in England. Milton had declared it, in a prose as majestic as any passage of the *Paradise Lost*. The Commonwealth had been built on it; and the whole Revolution of 1688. And they who now framed it into their permanent organic law, and made it supreme in the country they were shaping, were in harmony with the noblest inspirations of the past. They were not innovating with a rash recklessness. They were simply accepting and re-affirming what they had learned from luminous events and illustrious men. So their work had a dignity, a strength, and a permanence which can never belong to mere fresh speculation. It interlocked with that of multitudes going before. It derived a virtue from every field of struggle in England; from every scaffold, hallowed by free and consecrated blood; from every hour of great debate. It was only the complete development into law, for a separated people, of that august ancestral liberty, the germs of which had preceded the Heptarchy, the gradual definition and establishment of which had been the glory of English history. A thousand years brooded over the room where they asserted hereditary rights. Its walls showed neither portraits nor mottoes; but the Kaiser-saal at Frankfurt was not hung around with such recollections. No titles were worn by those plain men; but there had not been

*English Liberty, the Parent of Ours.*

one knightly soldier, or one patriotic and prescient statesman, standing for liberty in the splendid centuries of its English growth, who did not touch them with unseen accolade, and bid them be faithful. The paper which they adopted, fresh from the pen of its young author, and written on his hired pine table, was already, in essential life, of a venerable age ; and it took immense impulse, it derived an instant and vast authority, from its relation to that undying past in which they too had grand inheritance, and from which their public life had come.

Englishmen themselves now recognize this, and often are proud of it. The distinguished representative of Great Britain at Washington may think his government, as no doubt he does, superior to ours ; but his clear eye cannot fail to see that English liberty was the parent of ours, and that the new and broader continent here opened before it, suggested that expansion of it which we celebrate to-day. His ancestors, like ours, helped to build the Republic ; and its faithfulness to the past, amid all reformations, was one great secret of its earliest triumph, has been one source, from that day to this, of its enduring and prosperous strength.

The Congress, and the People behind it, asserted for themselves hereditary liberties, and hazarded everything in the purpose to complete them. But they also affirmed, with emphasis and effect, another right, more general than this, which made their action

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significant and important to other peoples, which made it, indeed, a signal to the nations of the right of each to assert for itself the just prerogative of forming its government, electing its rulers, ordaining its laws, as might to it seem most expedient. Hear again the immortal words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; \* \* that to secure these [unalienable] rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundations in such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

This is what the party of Bentham called "the assumption of natural rights, claimed without the slightest evidence of their existence, and supported by vague and declamatory generalities." This is what we receive as the decisive and noble declaration, spoken with the simplicity of a perfect conviction, of a natural right as patent as the continent; a declaration which challenged at once the attention of mankind, and which is now practically assumed as a premise in international relations and public law.

Of course it was not a new discovery. It was old as the earliest of political philosophers; as old, indeed, as the earliest communities, which, becoming

*The Dutch Republic, Exceptional in Europe.*

established in particular locations, had there developed their own institutions, and repelled with vehemence the assaults that would change them. But in the growth of political societies, and the vast expansion of imperial states, by the conquest of those adjacent and weaker, this right, so easily recognized at the outset, so germane to the instincts, so level with the reason, of every community, had widely passed out of men's thoughts; and the power of a conquering state to change the institutions and laws of a people, or impose on it new ones,—the power of a parent state to shape the forms and prescribe the rules of the colonies which went from it,—had been so long and abundantly exercised, that the very right of the people, thus conquered or colonial, to consult its own interests in the frame of its government, had been almost forgotten.

It might be a high speculation of scholars, or a charming dream of political enthusiasts. But it was not a maxim for the practical statesman; and whatever its correctness as an ideal principle, it was vain to expect to see it established in a world full of kings who claimed, each for himself, an authority from God, and full of states intent on grasping and governing by their law adjacent domains. The revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish domination had been the one instance in modern history in which the inherent right of a People to suit itself in the frame of its government had been proclaimed, and

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then maintained; and that had been at the outset a paroxysmal revolt, against tyranny so crushing, and cruelties so savage, that they took it out of the line of examples. The Dutch Republic was almost as exceptional, through the fierce wickedness which had crowded it into being, as was Switzerland itself, on its Alpine heights. For an ordinary state to claim self-regulation, and found its government on a Plebiscit, was to contradict precedent, and to set at defiance European tradition.

Our fathers, however, in a somewhat vague way, had held from the start that they had right to an autonomy; and that acts of Parliament, if not appointments of the crown, took proper effect upon these shores only by reason of their assent. Their charters were held to confirm this doctrine. The conviction, at first practical and instinctive, rather than theoretic, had grown with their growth, and had been intensified into positive affirmation and public exhibition as the British rule impinged more sharply on their interests and their hopes. It had finally become the general and decisive conviction of the colonies. It had spoken already in armed resistance to the troops of the king. It had been articulated, with gathering emphasis, in many resolves of assemblies and conventions. It was now, finally, most energetically, set forth to the world in the great Declaration; and in that utterance, made general, not particular, and founding the rights of the people

*The Declaration Instructive to other Nations.*

in this country on principles as wide as humanity itself, there lay an appeal to every nation :—an appeal whose words took unparalleled force, were illuminated and made rubrical, in the fire and blood of the following war.

When the Emperor Ferdinand visited Innsbruck, that beautiful town of the Austrian Tyrol, in 1838, it is said that the inhabitants wrote his name in immense bonfires, along the sides of the precipitous hills which shelter the town. Over a space of four or five miles extended that colossal illumination, till the heavens seemed on fire in the far-reflected upstreaming glow. The right of a people, separated from others, to its own institutions—our fathers wrote this in lines so vivid and so large that the whole world could see them; and they followed that writing with the consenting thunders of so many cannon that even the lands across the Atlantic were shaken and filled with the long reverberation.

The doctrine had, of course, in every nation, its two-fold internal application, as well as its front against external powers. On the one hand it swept with destroying force against the notion, so long maintained, of the right of certain families in the world, called Hapsburg, Bourbon, Stuart, or whatever, to govern the rest; and wherever it was received it made the imagined divine right of kings an obsolete and contemptible fiction. On the other hand, it smote with equal energy against the preten-

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sions of any minority within the state—whether banded together by the ties of descent, or of neighborhood in location, or of common opinion, or supposed common interest—to govern the rest; or even to impair the established and paramount government of the rest by separating themselves organically from it.

It was never the doctrine of the fathers that the people of Kent, Cornwall, or Lincoln, might sever themselves from the rest of England, and, while they had their voice and vote in the public councils, might assert the right to govern the whole, under threat of withdrawal if their minor vote were not suffered to control. They were not seeking to initiate anarchy, and to make it thenceforth respectable in the world by support of their suffrages. They recognized the fact that the state exists to meet permanent needs, is the ordinance of God as well as the family; and that He has determined the bounds of men's habitation, by rivers, seas, and mountain chains, shaping countries as well as continents into physical coherence, while giving one man his birth on the north of the Pyrenees, another on the south, one on the terraced banks of the Rhine, another in English meadow or upland. They saw that a common and fixed habitation, in a country thus physically defined, especially when combined with community of descent, of permanent public interest, and of the language on which thought is interchanged—that these

*The People, as a Whole, Sovereign.*

make a People; and such a People, as a true and abiding body-politic, they affirmed had right to shape its government, forbidding others to intermeddle.

But it must be the general mind of the People which determined the questions thus involved; not a dictating class within the state, whether known as peers or associated commoners, whether scattered widely, as one among several political parties, or grouped together in some one section, and having a special interest to encourage. The decision of the general public mind, as deliberately reached, and authentically declared, that must be the end of debate; and the right of resistance, or the right of division, after that, if such right exist, it is not to be vindicated from their Declaration. Any one who thought such government by the whole intolerable to him was always at liberty to expatriate himself, and find elsewhere such other institutions as he might prefer. But he could not tarry, and still not submit. He was not a monarch, without the crown, before whose contrary judgment and will the public councils must be dumb. While dwelling in the land, and having the same opportunity with others to seek the amendment of what he disapproved, the will of the whole was binding upon him; and that obligation he could not vacate by refusing to accept it. If one could not, neither could ten, nor a hundred, nor a million, who still remained a minority of the whole.

To allow such a right would have been to make

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government transparently impossible. Not separate sections only, but counties, townships, school districts, neighborhoods, must have the same right; and each individual, with his own will for his final law, must be the complete ultimate State.

It was no such disastrous folly which the fathers of our Republic affirmed. They ruled out kings, princes, peers, from any control over the People; and they did not give to a transient minority, wherever it might appear, on whatever question, a greater privilege, because less defined, than that which they jealously withheld from these classes. Such a tyranny of irresponsible occasional minorities would have seemed to them only more intolerable than that of classes, organized, permanent, and limited by law. And when it was affirmed by some, and silently feared by many others, that in our late immense civil war the multitudes who adhered to the old Constitution had forgotten or discarded the principles of the earlier Declaration, those assertions and fears were alike without reason. The People which adopted that Declaration, when distributed into colonies, was the People which afterward, when compacted into states, established the Confederation of 1781—imperfect enough, but whose abiding renown it is, that under it the war was ended. It was the same People which subsequently framed the supreme Constitution. “We, the people of the United States,” do ordain and establish the following Constitution,

*The Constitution Supreme.*

— so runs the majestic and vital instrument. It contains provisions for its own emendation. When the people will, they may set it aside, and put in place of it one wholly different; and no other nation can intervene. But while it continues, it, and the laws made normally under it, are not subject to resistance by a portion of the people, conspiring to direct or limit the rest. And whensoever any pretension like this shall appear, if ever again it does appear, it will undoubtedly as instantly appear that, even as in the past so in the future, the people whose our government is, and whose complete and magnificent domain God has marked out for it, will subdue resistance, compel submission, forbid secession, though it cost again, as it cost before, four years of war, with treasure uncounted and inestimable life.

The right of a People upon its own territory, as equally against any classes within it or any external powers, this is the doctrine of our Declaration. We know how it here has been applied, and how settled it is upon these shores for the time to come. We know, too, something of what impression it instantly made upon the minds of other peoples, and how they sprang to greet and accept it. In the fine image of Bancroft, “the astonished nations, as they read that all men are created equal, started out of their lethargy, like those who have been exiles from child-

*Oration at New York.*

hood, when they suddenly hear the dimly-remembered accents of their mother-tongue."\*

The theory of scholars had now become the maxim of a State. The diffused ineffectual nebulous light had got itself concentered into an orb; and the radiance of it, penetrating and hot, shone afar. You know how France responded to it; with passionate speed seeking to be rid of the terrific establishments in church and state which had nearly crushed the life of the people, and with a beautiful though credulous unreason trying to lift, by the grasp of the law, into intelligence and political capacity the masses whose training for thirteen centuries had been despotic. No operation of natural law was any more certain than the failure of that too daring experiment. But the very failure involved progress from it; involved, undoubtedly, that ultimate success which it was vain to try to extemporize. Certainly the other European powers will not again intervene, as they did, to restore a despotism which France has abjured, and with foreign bayonets to uphold institutions which it does not desire. Italy, Spain, Germany, England—they are not Republican in the form of their government, nor as yet democratic in the distribution of power. But each of them is as full of this organific, self-demonstrating doctrine, as is our own land; and England would send no troops to Canada to compel its submission if it should decide to set up for itself.

\* Vol. VIII., p. 473.

*Liberal States most Secure.*

Neither Italy nor Spain would maintain a monarchy a moment longer than the general mind of the country preferred it. Germany would be fused in the fire of one passion if any foreign nation whatever should assume to dictate the smallest change in one of its laws.

The doctrine of the proper prerogative of kings, derived from God, which in the last century was more common in Europe than the doctrine of the centrality of the sun in our planetary system, is now as obsolete among the intelligent as are the epicycles of Ptolemy. Every government expects to stand henceforth by assent of the governed, and by no other claim of right. It is strong by beneficence, not by tradition; and at the height of its military successes it circulates appeals, and canvasses for ballots. Revolution is carefully sought to be averted, by timely and tender amelioration of the laws. The most progressive and liberal states are most evidently secure; while those which stand, like old olive-trees at Tivoli, with feeble arms supported on pillars, and hollow trunks filled up with stone, are palpably only tempting the blast. An alliance of sovereigns, like that called the Holy, for reconstructing the map of Europe, and parcelling out the passive peoples among separate governments, would to-day be no more possible than would Charlemagne's plan for reconstructing the empire of the West. Even Murad, Sultan of Turkey, now takes the place

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of Abdul the deposed, “by the grace of God, and the will of the people;” and that accomplished and illustrious Prince, whose empire under the Southern Cross rivals our own in its extent, and most nearly approaches it on this hemisphere in stability of institutions and in practical freedom, has his surest title to the throne which he honors, in his wise liberality, and his faithful endeavor for the good of his people. As long as in this he continues, as now, a recognized leader among the monarchs—ready to take and seek suggestions from even a democratic Republic—his throne will be steadfast as the water-sheds of Brazil; and while his successors maintain his spirit, no domestic insurrection will test the question whether they retain that celerity in movement with which Dom Pedro has astonished Americans.

It is no more possible to reverse this tendency toward popular sovereignty, and to substitute for it the right of families, classes, minorities, or of intervening foreign states, than it is to arrest the motion of the earth, and make it swing the other way in its annual orbit. In this, at least, our fathers’ Declaration has made its impression on the history of mankind.

It was the act of a People, and not of persons, except as these represented and led that. It was the act of a People, not starting out on new theories of government, so much as developing into forms of law and practical force a great and gradual inherit-

### *Effect on Popular Advancement.*

ance of freedom. It was the act of a People, declaring for others, as for itself, the right of each to its own form of government, without interference from other nations, without restraint by privileged classes.

It only remains, then, to ask the question how far it has contributed to the peace, the advancement, and the permanent welfare, of the People by which it was set forth; of other nations which it has affected. And to ask this question is almost to answer it. The answer is as evident as the sun in the heavens.

It certainly cannot be affirmed that we in America, any more than persons or peoples elsewhere, have reached as yet the ideal state, of private liberty combined with a perfect public order, or of culture complete, and a supreme character. The political world, as well as the religious, since Christ was on earth, looks forward, not backward, for its millennium. That Golden Age is still to come which is to shine in the perfect splendor reflected from Him who is ascended; and no prophecy tells us how long before the advancing race shall reach and cross its glowing marge, or what long effort, or what tumults of battle, are still to precede.

In this country, too, there have been immense special impediments to hinder wide popular progress in things which are highest. Our people have had a continent to subdue. They have been, from the

*Oration at New York.*

start, in constant migration. Westward, from the counties of the Hudson and the Mohawk, around the lakes, over the prairies, across the great river,—westward still, over alkali plains, across terrible cañons, up gorges of the mountains where hardly the wild goat could find footing,—westward always, till the Golden Gate opened out on the sea which has been made ten thousand miles wide, as if nothing less could stop the march,—this has been the popular movement, from almost the day of the great Declaration. To-morrow's tents have been pitched in new fields; and last year's houses await new possessors.

With such constant change, such wide dislocation of the mass of the people from early and settled home-associations, and with the incessant occupation of the thoughts by the great physical problems presented,—not so much by any struggle for existence, as by harvests for which the prairies waited, by mills for which the rivers clamored, by the coal and the gold which offered themselves to the grasp of the miner,—it would not have been strange if a great and dangerous decadence had occurred in that domestic and private virtue of which Home is the nursery, in that generous and reverent public spirit which is but the effluence of its combined rays. It would have been wholly too much to expect that under such influences the highest progress should have been realized, in speculative thought, in artistic culture, or in the researches of pure science.

### *Literary Attainments.*

Accordingly, we find that in these departments not enough has been accomplished to make our progress signal in them, though here and there the eminent souls "that are like stars and dwell apart" have illumined themes highest with their high interpretation. But History has been cultivated among us, with an enthusiasm, to an extent, hardly, I think, to have been anticipated among a people so recent and expectant; and Prescott, Motley, Irving, Ticknor, with him upon whose splendid page all American history has been amply illustrated, are known as familiarly and honored as highly in Europe as here. We have had as well distinguished poets, and have them now; to whom the nation has been responsive; who have not only sung themselves, but through whom the noblest poems of the Old World have come into the English tongue, rendered in fit and perfect music, and some of whose minds, blossoming long ago in the solemn or beautiful fancies of youth, with perennial energy still ripen to new fruit as they near or cross their four-score years. In Medicine, and Law, as well as in Theology, in Fiction, Biography, and the vivid Narrative of exploration and discovery, the people whose birth-day we commemorate has added something to the possession of men. Its sculptors and painters have won high places in the brilliant realm of modern art. Publicists like Wheaton, jurists like Kent, have gained a celebrity reflecting honor on the land; and

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if no orator, so vast in knowledge, so profound and discursive in philosophical thought, so affluent in imagery, and so glorious in diction, as Edmund Burke, has yet appeared, we must remember that centuries were needed to produce him elsewhere, and that any of the great Parliamentary debaters, aside from him, have been matched or surpassed in the hearing of those who have hung with rapt sympathetic attention on the lips of Clay, or of Rufus Choate, or have felt themselves listening to the mightiest mind which ever touched theirs when they stood beneath the imperial voice in which Webster spoke.

In applied science there has been much done in the country, for which the world admits itself our grateful debtor. I need not multiply illustrations of this, from locomotives, printing-presses, sewing-machines, revolvers, steam-reapers, bank-locks. One instance suffices, most signal of all.

When Morse, from Washington, thirty-two years ago, sent over the wires his word to Baltimore, "What hath God wrought," he had given to all the nations of mankind an instrument the most sensitive, expansive, quickening, which the world yet possesses. He had bound the earth in electric network.

England touches India to-day, and France Algeria, while we are in contact with all the continents, upon those scarcely perceptible nerves. The great strat-

### *The Electric Telegraph.*

egist, like Von Moltke, with these in his hands, from the silence of his office directs campaigns, dictates marches, wins victories ; the statesman in the cabinet inspires and regulates the distant diplomacies ; while the traveler in any port or mart is by the same marvel of mechanism in instant communication with all centres of commerce. It is certainly not too much to say that no other invention of the world in this century has so richly deserved the medals, crosses, and diamond decorations, the applause of senates, the gifts of kings, which were showered upon its author, as did this invention, which finally taught and utilized the lightnings whose nature a signer of the great Declaration had made apparent.

But after all it is not so much in special inventions, or in eminent attainments made by individuals, that we are to find the answer to the question, “ What did that day, a hundred years since, accomplish for us ? ” Still less is it found in the progress we have made in outward wealth and material success. This might have been made, approximately at least, if the British supremacy had here continued. The prairies would have been as productive as now, the mines of copper and silver and gold as rich and extensive, the coal-beds as vast, and the cotton-fields as fertile, if we had been born the subjects of the Georges, or of Victoria. Steam would have kept its propulsive force, and sea and land have been theatres of its triumph. The river would have been as

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smooth a highway for the commerce which seeks it; and the leap of every mountain stream would have given as swift and constant a push to the wheels that set spindles and saws in motion. Electricity itself would have lost no property, and might have become as completely as now the fire-winged messenger of the thought of mankind.

But what we have now, and should not have had except for that paper which the Congress adopted, is the general and increasing popular advancement in knowledge, vigor, as I believe in moral culture, of which our country has been the arena, and in which lies its hope for the future. The independence of the nation has reacted, with sympathetic force, on the personal life which the nation includes. It has made men more resolute, aspiring, confident, and more susceptible to whatever exalts. The doctrine that all by creation are equal,—not in respect of physical force or of mental endowment, of means for culture or inherited privilege, but in respect of immortal faculty, of duty to each other, of right to protection and to personal development,—this has given manliness to the poor, enterprise to the weak, a kindling hope to the most obscure. It has made the individuals of whom the nation is composed more alive to the forces which educate and exalt.

There has been incessant motive, too, for the wide and constant employment of these forces. It has been felt that, as the People is sovereign here, that

### *The Efficiency of the Church.*

People must be trained in mind and spirit for its august and sovereign function. The establishment of common-schools, for a needful primary secular training, has been an instinct of Society, only recognized and repeated in provisions of statutes. The establishment of higher schools, classical and general, of colleges, scientific and professional seminaries, has been as well the impulse of the nation, and the furtherance of them a care of governments. The immense expansion of the press in this country has been based fundamentally upon the same impulse, and has wrought with beneficent general force in the same direction. Religious instruction has gone as widely as this distribution of secular knowledge.

It used to be thought that a Church dissevered from the State must be feeble. Wanting wealth of endowments and dignity of titles—its clergy entitled to no place among the peers, its revenues assured by no legal enactments—it must remain obscure and poor; while the absence of any external limitations, of parliamentary statutes and a legal creed, must leave it liable to endless division, and tend to its speedy disintegration into sects and schisms. It seemed as hopeless to look for strength, wealth, beneficence, for extensive educational and missionary work, to such churches as these, as to look for aggressive military organization to a convention of

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farmers, or for the volume and thunder of Niagara to a thousand sinking and separate rills.

But the work which was given to be done in this country was so great and momentous, and has been so constant, that matching itself against that work, the Church, under whatever name, has realized a strength, and developed an activity, wholly fresh in the world in modern times. It has not been antagonized by that instinct of liberty which always awakens against its work where religion is required by law. It has seized the opportunity. Its ministers and members have had their own standards, leaders, laws, and sometimes have quarreled, fiercely enough, as to which were the better. But in the work which was set them to do, to give to the sovereign American people the knowledge of God in the Gospel of His Son, their only strife has been one of emulation—to go the furthest, to give the most, and to bless most largely the land and its future.

The spiritual incentive has of course been supreme; but patriotism has added its impulse to the work. It has been felt that Christianity is the basis of Republican empire, its bond of cohesion, its life-giving law; that the manuscript copies of the Gospels, sent by Gregory to Augustine at Canterbury, and still preserved on sixth century parchments at Oxford and Cambridge—more than Magna Charta itself, these are the roots of English liberty; that Magna Charta, and the Petition of Right, with our completing Declaration,

### *Effect of Educational Work.*

were possible only because these had been before them. And so in the work of keeping Christianity prevalent in the land, all earnest churches have eagerly striven. Their preachers have been heard where the pioneer's fire scarcely was kindled. Their schools have been gathered in the temporary camp, not less than in the hamlet or town. They have sent their books with lavish distribution, they have scattered their Bibles like leaves of autumn, where settlements hardly were more than prophesied. In all languages of the land they have told the old story of the Law and the Cross, a present Redemption, and a coming Tribunal. The highest truths, most solemn and inspiring, have been the truths most constantly in hand. It has been felt that, in the highest sense, a muscular Christianity was indispensable where men lifted up axes upon the thick trees. The delicate speculations of the closet and the schools were too dainty for the work; and the old confessions of Councils and Reformers, whose undecaying and sovereign energy no use exhausts, have been those always most familiar, where the trapper on his stream, or the miner in his gulch, has found priest or minister on his track.

Of course not all the work has been fruitful. Not all God's acorns come to oaks, but here and there one. Not all the seeds of flowers germinate, but enough to make some radiant gardens. And out of all this work and gift, has come a mental and moral training, to the nation at large, such as it certainly

*Oration at New York.*

would not have had except for this effort, the effort for which would not have been made, on a scale so immense, except for this incessant aim to fit the nation for its great experiment of self-regulation. The Declaration of Independence has been the great charter of Public Education ; has given impulse and scope to this prodigious Missionary work.

The result of the whole is evident enough. I am not here as the eulogist of our People, beyond what facts justify. I admit, with regret, that American manners sometimes are coarse, and American culture often very imperfect ; that the noblest examples of consummate training imply a leisure which we have not had, and are perhaps most easily produced where social advantages are more permanent than here, and the law of heredity has a wider recognition. We all know, too well, how much of even vice and shame there has been, and is, in our national life ; how sluggish the public conscience has been before sharpest appeals ; how corruption has entered high places in the government, and the blister of its touch has been upon laws, as well as on the acts of prominent officials. And we know the reckless greed and ambition, the fierce party spirit, the personal wrangles and jealous animosities, with which our Congress has been often dishonored, at which the nation—sadder still—has sometimes laughed, in idiotic unreason.

But knowing all this, and with the impression of it full on our thoughts, we may exult in the real,

*The Nation's Moral Soundness.*

steady, and prophesying growth of a better spirit toward dominance in the land. I scout the thought that we as a people are worse than our fathers ! John Adams, at the head of the War Department, in 1776, wrote bitter laments of the corruption which existed in even that infant age of the Republic, and of the spirit of venality, rapacious and insatiable, which was then the most alarming enemy of America. He declared himself ashamed of the age which he lived in ! In Jefferson's day, all Federalists expected the universal dominion of French infidelity. In Jackson's day, all Whigs thought the country gone to ruin already, as if Mr. Biddle had had the entire public hope locked up in the vaults of his terminated bank. In Polk's day, the excitements of the Mexican War gave life and germination to many seeds of rascality. There has never been a time—not here alone, in any country—when the fierce light of incessant inquiry blazing on men in public life, would not have revealed forces of evil like those we have seen, or when the condemnation which followed the discovery would have been sharper. And it is among my deepest convictions that, with all which has happened to debase and debauch it, the nation at large was never before more mentally vigorous or morally sound.

Gentlemen : The demonstration is around us !

This city, if any place on the continent, should have been the one where a reckless wickedness should

*Oration at New York.*

have had sure prevalence, and reforming virtue the least chance of success. Starting in 1790 with a white population of less than thirty thousand—growing steadily for forty years, till that population had multiplied six-fold—taking into itself, from that time on, such multitudes of emigrants from all parts of the earth that the dictionaries of the languages spoken in its streets would make a library—all forms of luxury coming with wealth, and all means and facilities for every vice—the primary elections being always the seed-bed out of which springs its choice of rulers, with the influence which it sends to the public councils—its citizens so absorbed in their pursuits that oftentimes, for years together, large numbers of them have left its affairs in hands the most of all unsuited to so supreme and delicate a trust—it might well have been expected that while its docks were echoing with a commerce which encompassed the globe, while its streets were thronged with the eminent and the gay from all parts of the land, while its homes had in them uncounted thousands of noble men and cultured women, while its stately squares swept out year by year across new spaces, while it founded great institutions of beneficence, and shot new spires upward toward heaven, and turned the rocky waste to a pleasure-ground famous in the earth, its government would decay, and its recklessness of moral ideas, if not as well of political principles, would become apparent.

*This City an Illustration.*

Men have prophesied this, from the outset till now. The fear of it began with the first great advance of the wealth, population, and fame of the city; and there have not been wanting facts in its history which served to renew, if not to justify, the fear.

But when the War of 1861 broke on the land, and shadowed every home within it, this city,—which had voted by immense majorities against the existing administration, and which was linked by unnumbered ties with the vast communities then rushing to assail it,—flung out its banners from window and spire, from City Hall and newspaper office, and poured its wealth and life into the service of sustaining the Government, with a swiftness and a vehement energy that were never surpassed. When, afterward, greedy and treacherous men, capable and shrewd, deceiving the unwary, hiring the skillful, and moulding the very law to their uses, had concentrated in their hands the government of the city, and had bound it in seemingly invincible chains, while they plundered its treasury,—it rose upon them, when advised of the facts, as Samson rose upon the Philistines; and the two new cords that were upon his hands no more suddenly became as flax that was burnt than did those manacles imposed upon the city by the craft of the Ring.

Its leaders of opinion to-day are the men—like him who presides in our assembly—whom virtue exalts, and character crowns. It rejoices in a Chief

*Oration at New York.*

Magistrate as upright and intrepid, in a virtuous cause, as any of those whom he succeeds. It is part of a State whose present position, in laws, and officers, and the spirit of its people, does no discredit to the noblest of its memories. And from these heights between the rivers, looking over the land, looking out on the earth to which its daily embassies go, it sees nowhere beneath the sun a city more ample in its moral securities, a city more dear to those who possess it, a city more splendid in promise and in hope.

What is true of the city is true, in effect, of all the land. Two things, at least, have been established by our national history, the impression of which the world will not lose. The one is, that institutions like ours, when sustained by a prevalent moral life throughout the nation, are naturally permanent. The other is, that they tend to peaceful relations with other states. They do this in fulfillment of an organic tendency, and not through any accident of location. The same tendency will inhere in them, wheresoever established.

In this age of the world, and in all the states which Christianity quickens, the allowance of free movement to the popular mind is essential to the stability of public institutions. There may be restraint enough to guide, and keep such movement from premature exhibition. But there cannot be force enough used to resist it, and to reverse its gathering current. If

*Progress in Europe.*

there is, the government is swiftly overthrown, as in France so often, or is left on one side, as Austria has been by the advancing German people; like the castle of Heidelberg, at once palace and fortress, high-placed and superb, but only the stateliest ruin in Europe, while the rail-train thunders through the tunnel beneath it, and the Neckar sings along its near channel as if tower and tournament never had been. Revolution, transformation, organic change, have thus all the time for this hundred years been proceeding in Europe; sometimes silent, but oftener amid thunders of stricken fields; sometimes pacific, but oftener with garments rolled in blood.

In England the progress has been peaceful, the popular demands being ratified as law whenever the need became apparent. It has been vast, as well as peaceful; in the extension of suffrage, in the ever-increasing power of the Commons, in popular education. Chatham himself would hardly know his own England if he should return to it. The Throne continues, illustrated by the virtues of her who fills it; and the ancient forms still obtain in Parliament. But it could not have occurred to him, or to Burke, that a century after the ministry of Grenville the embarkation of the Pilgrims would be one of the prominent historical pictures on the panels of the lobby of the House of Lords, or that the name of Oliver Cromwell, and of Bradshaw, President of the High Court of Justice, would be cut in the stone in Westminster

*Oration at New York.*

Abbey, over the places in which they were buried, and whence their decaying bodies were dragged to the gibbet and the ditch. England is now, as has been well said, "an aristocratic Republic, with a permanent Executive." Its only perils lie in the fact of that aristocracy, which, however, is flexible enough to endure, of that permanence in the Executive, which would hardly outlive one vicious Prince.

What changes have taken place in France, I need not remind you, nor how uncertain is still its future. You know how the swift untiring wheels, of advance or reäction, have rolled this way and that, in Italy, and in Spain; how Germany has had to be reconstructed; how Hungary has had to fight and suffer for that just place in the Austrian councils which only imperial defeat surrendered. You know how precarious the equilibrium now is, in many states, between popular rights and princely prerogative; what armies are maintained, to fortify governments; what fear of sudden and violent change, like an avalanche tumbling at the touch of a foot, perplexes nations. The records of change make the history of Europe. The expectation of change is almost as wide as the continent itself.

Meantime, how permanent has been this Republic, which seemed at the outset to foreign spectators a mere sudden insurrection, a mere organized riot! Its organic law, adopted after exciting debate, but arousing no battle and enforced by no army, has been in-

*Triumph of the Republic.*

terpreted, and peacefully administered, with one great exception, from the beginning. It has once been assailed, with passion and skill, with splendid daring and unbounded self-sacrifice, by those who sought a sectional advantage through its destruction. No monarchy of the world could have stood that assault. It seemed as if the last fatal Apocalypse had come, to drench the land with plague and blood, and wrap it in a fiery gloom. The Republic,

—“pouring, like the tide into a breach,  
With ample and brim fulness of its force,”

subdued the rebellion, emancipated the race which had been in subjection, restored the dominion of the old Constitution, amended its provisions in the contrary direction from that which had been so fiercely sought, gave it guaranties of endurance while the continent lasts, and made its ensigns more eminent than ever in the regions from which they had been expelled. The very portions of the people which then sought its overthrow are now again its applauding adherents,—the great and constant reconciling force, the tranquillizing Irenarch, being the freedom which it leaves in their hands.

It has kept its place, this Republic of ours, in spite of the rapid expansion of the nation over territory so wide that the scanty strip of the original states is only as a fringe on its immense mantle. It has kept

*Oration at New York.*

its place, while vehement debates, involving the profoundest ethical principles, have stirred to its depths the whole public mind. It has kept its place, while the tribes of mankind have been pouring upon it, seeking the shelter and freedom which it gave. It saw an illustrious President murdered, by the bullet of an assassin. It saw his place occupied as quietly by another as if nothing unforeseen or alarming had occurred. It saw prodigious armies assembled, for its defence. It saw those armies, at the end of the war, marching in swift and long procession up the streets of the Capital, and then dispersing into their former peaceful citizenship, as if they had had no arms in their hands. The General before whose skill and will those armies had been shot upon the forces which opposed them, and whose word had been their military law, remained for three years an appointed officer of the government he had saved. Elected then to be the head of that government, and again re-elected by the ballots of his countrymen, in a few months more he will have retired, to be thenceforth a citizen like the rest, eligible to office, and entitled to vote, but with no thought of any prerogative descending to him, or to his children, from his great service and military fame. The Republic, whose triumphing armies he led, will remember his name, and be grateful for his work; but neither to him, nor to any one else, will it ever give sovereignty over itself.

From the Lakes to the Gulf its will is the law, its

*Permanence of the Republic.*

dominion complete. Its centripetal and centrifugal forces are balanced, almost as in the astronomy of the heavens. Decentralizing authority, it puts his own part of it into the hand of every citizen. Giving free scope to private enterprise, allowing not only, but accepting and encouraging, each movement of the public reason which is its only terrestrial rule, there is no threat, in all its sky, of division or downfall. It cannot be successfully assailed from within. It never will be assailed from without, with a blow at its life, while other nations continue sane.

It has been sometimes compared to a pyramid, broad-based and secure, not liable to overthrow as is obelisk or column, by storm or age. The comparison is just, but it is not sufficient. It should rather be compared to one of the permanent features of nature, and not to any artificial construction:—to the river, which flows, like our own Hudson, along the courses that nature opens, forever in motion, but forever the same; to the lake, which lies on common days level and bright in placid stillness, while it gathers its fullness from many lands, and lifts its waves in stormy strength when winds assail it; to the mountain, which is shaped by no formula of art, and which only rarely, in some supreme sun-burst, flushes with color, but whose roots the very earthquake cannot shake, and on whose brow the storms fall hurtless, while under its shelter the cottage nestles, and up its sides the gardens climb.

*Oration at New York.*

So stands the Republic :

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air.

Our government has been permanent, as established upon the old Declaration, and steadily sustained by the undecaying and moulding life in the soul of the Nation. It has been peaceful, also, for the most part, in scheme and in spirit ; and has shown at no time such an appetite for war as has been familiar, within the century, in many lands.

This may be denied, by foreign critics ; or at any rate be explained, if the fact be admitted, by our isolation from other states, by our occupation in peaceful labors, which have left no room for martial enterprise, perhaps by an alleged want in us of that chivalric and high-pitched spirit which is gladdened by danger and which welcomes the fray. I do not think the explanation sufficient, the analysis just.

This people was trained to military effort, from its beginning. It had in it the blood of Saxon and Norman, neither of whom was afraid of war ; the very same blood which a few years after was poured out like water at Marston Moor, and Naseby, and Dunbar. Ardor and fortitude were added to its spirit by those whose fathers had followed Coligni, by the children of those whom Alva and Parma could not conquer, or whom Gustavus had inspired with his intense and paramount will. With savages in the woods, and the gray wolf prowling around its cabins,

*Martial Spirit of the People.*

the hand of this people was from the first as familiar with the gun-stock as with mattock or plough; and it spent more time, in proportion to its leisure, in protecting itself against violent assault than was spent by France, the most martial of kingdoms, on all the bloody fields of Europe.

Then came the Revolution, with its years of war, and its crowning success, to intensify, and almost to consecrate this spirit, and to give it distribution; while, from that time, the nation has been taking into its substance abounding elements from all the fighting peoples of the earth. The Irishman, who is never so entirely himself as when the battle-storm hurtles around him; the Frenchman, who says "After you, Gentlemen," before the infernal fire of Fontenoy; the German, whose irresistible tread the world lately heard at Sadowa and Sedan,—these have been entering, representatives of two of them entering by millions, into the Republic. If any nation, therefore, should have a fierce and martial temper, this is the one. If any people should keep its peaceful neighbours in fear, lest its aggression should smite their homes, it is a people born, and trained, and replenished like this, admitting no rule but its own will, and conscious of a strength whose annual increase makes arithmetic pant.

What has been the fact? Lay out of sight that late civil war which could not be averted, when once

*Oration at New York.*

it had been threatened, except by the sacrifice of the government itself, and a wholly unparalleled public suicide, and how much of war with foreign powers has the century seen? There has been a frequent crackle of musketry along the frontiers, as Indian tribes, which refused to be civilized, have slowly and fiercely retreated toward the West. There was one war declared against Tripoli, in 1801, when the Republic took by the throat the African pirates to whom Europe paid tribute, and when the gallantry of Preble and Decatur gave early distinction to our navy. There was a war declared against England, in 1812, when our seamen had been taken from under our flag, from the decks indeed of our national ships, and our commerce had been practically swept from the seas. There was a war affirmed already to exist in Mexico, in 1846, entered into by surprise, never formally declared, against which the moral sentiment of the nation rose widely in revolt, but which in its result added largely to our territory, opened to us Californian treasures, and wrote the names of Buena Vista and Monterey on our short annals.

That has been our military history; and if a People, as powerful and as proud, has anywhere been more peaceable also, in the last hundred years, the strictest research fails to find it. Smarting with the injury done us by England during the crisis of our national peril, in spite of the remonstrances presented through that distinguished citizen who should have

*A Pacific Temper natural to the Republic.*

been your orator to-day,—while hostile taunts had incensed our people, while burning ships had exasperated commerce, and while what looked like artful evasions had made statesmen indignant,—with a half-million men who had hardly yet laid down their arms, with a navy never before so vast, or so fitted for service,—when a war with England would have had the force of passion behind it, and would at any rate have shown to the world that the nation respects its starry flag, and means to have it secure on the seas,—we referred all differences to arbitration, appointed commissioners, tried the cause at Geneva, with advocates, not with armies, and got a prompt and ample verdict. If Canada now lay next to Yorkshire it would not be safer from armed incursion than it is when divided by only a custom-house from all the strength of this Republic.

The fact is apparent, and the reason not less so. A monarchy, just as it is despotic, finds incitement to war; for pre-occupation of the popular mind; to gratify nobles, officers, the army; for historic renown. An intelligent Republic hates war, and shuns it. It counts standing armies a curse only second to an annual pestilence. It wants no glory but from growth. It delights itself in arts of peace, seeks social enjoyment and increase of possessions, and feels instinctively that, like Israel of old, “its strength is to sit still.” It cannot bear to miss the husbandman from the fields, the citizen from the town, the house-

*Oration at New York.*

father from the home, the worshipper from the church. To change or shape other people's institutions is no part of its business. To force them to accept its scheme of government would simply contradict and nullify its charter. Except, then, when it is startled into passion by the cry of a suffering under oppression which stirs its pulses into tumult, or when it is assailed in its own rights, citizens, property, it will not go to war; nor even then, if diplomacy can find a remedy for the wrong. "Millions for defence," said Cotesworth Pinckney to the French Directory, when Talleyrand in their name had threatened him with war, "but not a cent for tribute." He might have added, "and not a dollar for aggressive strife."

It will never be safe to insult such a nation, or to outrage its citizens; for the reddest blood is in its veins, and some Captain Ingraham may always appear, to lay his little sloop of war along-side the offending frigate, with shotted guns, and a peremptory summons. There is a way to make powder inexplosive; but, treat it chemically how you will, the dynamite will not stand many blows of the hammer. The detonating tendency is too permanent in it. But if left to itself, such a People will be peaceful, as ours has been. It will foster peace among the nations. It will tend to dissolve great permanent armaments, as the light conquers ice, and summer sunshine breaks the glacier which a hundred trip-hammers could only scar. The longer it continues,

*The Day to be Remembered.*

the more widely and effectively its influence spreads,  
the more will its benign example hasten the day, so  
long foretold, so surely coming, when

The war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle-flags are furled,  
In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.

Mr. President: Fellow-Citizens:—To an extent too great for your patience, but with a rapid incompleteness that is only too evident as we match it with the theme, I have outlined before you some of the reasons why we have right to commemorate the day whose hundredth anniversary has brought us together, and why the paper then adopted has interest and importance not only for us, but for all the advancing sons of men. Thank God that he who framed the Declaration, and he who was its foremost champion, both lived to see the nation they had shaped growing to greatness, and to die together, in that marvelous coincidence, on its semi-centennial! The fifty years which have passed since then have only still further honored their work. Mr. Adams was mistaken in the day which he named as the one to be most fondly remembered. It was not that on which Independence of the empire of Great Britain was formally resolved. It was that on which the reasons were given which justified the act, and the principles were announced which made it of secular significance to mankind. But he would have been absolutely right in saying of the fourth day

*Oration at New York.*

what he did say of the second: it “will be the most remarkable epoch in the history of America; to be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival, commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God, from one end of the continent to the other.”

It will not be forgotten, in the land or in the earth, until the stars have fallen from their poise; or until our vivid morning-star of Republican liberty, not losing its lustre, has seen its special brightness fade in the ampler effulgence of a freedom universal!

But while we rejoice in that which is past, and gladly recognize the vast organic mystery of life which was in the Declaration, the plans of Providence which slowly and silently, but with ceaseless progression, had led the way to it, the immense and enduring results of good which from it have flowed, let us not forget the duty which always equals privilege, and that of peoples, as well as of persons, to whomsoever much is given, shall only therefore the more be required. Let us consecrate ourselves, each one of us, here, to the further duties which wait to be fulfilled, to the work which shall consummate the great work of the Fathers!

From scanty soils come richest grapes, and on severe and rocky slopes the trees are often of toughest fibre. The wines of Rüdesheim and Johannisberg cannot be grown in the fatness of gardens, and the cedars of Lebanon disdain the levels of marsh

*The Duty of American Citizens.*

and meadow. So a heroism is sometimes native to penury which luxury enervates, and the great resolution which sprang up in the blast, and blossomed under inclement skies, may lose its shapely and steadfast strength when the air is all of summer softness. In exuberant resources is to be the coming American peril; in a swiftly increasing luxury of life. The old humility, hardihood, patience, are too likely to be lost when material success again opens, as it will, all avenues to wealth, and when its brilliant prizes solicit, as again they will, the national spirit.

Be it ours to endeavor that that temper of the Fathers which was nobler than their work shall live in the children, and exalt to its tone their coming career; that political intelligence, patriotic devotion, a reverent spirit toward Him who is above, an exulting expectation of the future of the World, and a sense of our relation to it, shall be, as of old, essential forces in our public life; that education and religion keep step all the time with the Nation's advance, and the School and the Church be always at home wherever its flag shakes out its folds. In a spirit worthy the memories of the Past let us set ourselves to accomplish the tasks which, in the sphere of national politics, still await completion. We burn the sunshine of other years, when we ignite the wood or coal upon our hearths. We enter a privilege which ages have secured, in our daily enjoyment of political freedom. While the kindling glow irradiates our

*Oration at New York.*

homes, let it shed its lustre on our spirit, and quicken it for its further work.

Let us fight against the tendency of educated men to reserve themselves from politics, remembering that no other form of human activity is so grand or effective as that which affects, first the character, and then the revelation of character in the government, of a great and free People. Let us make religious dissension here, as a force in politics, as absurd as witchcraft.\* Let party names be nothing to us, in comparison with that costly and proud inheritance of liberty and of law, which parties exist to conserve and enlarge, which any party will have here to maintain if it would not be buried, at the next cross-roads, with a stake through its breast. Let us seek the unity of all sections of the Republic, through the prevalence in all of mutual respect, through the assurance in all of local freedom, through the mastery in all of that supreme spirit which flashed from the lips of Patrick Henry, when he said, in the first Continental Congress, "I am not a Virginian, but an American." Let us take care that labor maintains its ancient place

\* Cromwell is sometimes considered a bigot. His rule on this subject is therefore the more worthy of record: "Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions; if they be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies. \*\* Take heed of being sharp, or too easily sharpened by others, against those to whom you can object little, but that they square not with you in every opinion concerning matters of religion. If there be any other offence to be charged upon him, that must, in a judicial way, receive determination."—Letter to Major-General Crawford, 10th March, 1643.

*Our Relation to Past, and Future.*

of privilege and honor, and that industry has no fetters imposed, of legal restraint or of social discredit, to hinder its work or to lessen its wage. Let us turn, and overturn, in public discussion, in political change, till we secure a Civil Service, honorable, intelligent, and worthy of the land, in which capable integrity, not partisan zeal, shall be the condition of each public trust; and let us resolve that whatever it may cost, of labor and of patience, of sharper economy and of general sacrifice, it shall come to pass that wherever American labor toils, wherever American enterprise plans, wherever American commerce reaches, thither again shall go as of old the country's coin—the American Eagle, with the encircling stars and golden plumes!

In a word, Fellow-Citizens, the moral life of the nation being ever renewed, all advancement and timely reform will come as comes the bourgeoning of the tree from the secret force which fills its veins. Let us each of us live, then, in the blessing and the duty of our great citizenship, as those who are conscious of unreckoned indebtedness to a heroic and prescient Past:—the grand and solemn lineage of whose freedom runs back beyond Bunker Hill or the Mayflower, runs back beyond munitments and memories of men, and has the majesty of far centuries on it! Let us live as those for whom God hid a continent from the world, till He could open all its scope to the freedom and faith of gathered peoples, from many lands,

*Oration at New York.*

to be a nation to His honor and praise! Let us live as those to whom He commits the magnificent trust of blessing peoples many and far, by the truths which He has made our life, and by the history which He helps us to accomplish.

Such relation to a Past ennobles this transient and vanishing life. Such a power of influence on the distant and the Future, is the supremest terrestrial privilege. It is ours, if we will, in the mystery of that spirit which has an immortal and a ubiquitous life. With the swifter instruments now in our hands, with the land compacted into one immense embracing home, with the world opened to the interchange of thought, and thrilling with the hopes that now animate its life, each American citizen has superb opportunity to make his influence felt afar, and felt for long!

Let us not be unmindful of this ultimate and inspiring lesson of the hour! By all the memories of the Past, by all the impulse of the Present, by the noblest instincts of our own souls, by the touch of His sovereign Spirit upon us, God make us faithful to the work, and to Him! that so not only this city may abide, in long and bright tranquillity of peace, when our eyes have shut forever on street, and spire, and populous square; that so the land, in all its future, may reflect an influence from this anniversary; and that, when another century has passed, the sun which then ascends the heavens may look on a world

*The Nation at the Next Centennial.*

advanced and illumined beyond our thought, and here  
may behold the same great Nation, born of struggle,  
baptized into liberty, and in its second terrific trial  
purchased by blood, then expanded and multiplied  
till all the land blooms at its touch, and still one in its  
life, because still pacific, Christian, free !





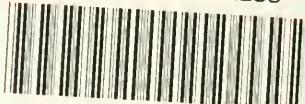








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